

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
WESTERN DISTRICT OF WASHINGTON
AT TACOMA

RONNIE LOUIS GAYLES,

Petitioner,

V.

STATE OF WASHINGTON,

Respondent.

Case No. C19-5366-BHS-TLF

ORDER TO SHOW CAUSE

Petitioner Ronnie Louis Gayles, who is proceeding *pro se*, filed a Petition for Writ of Habeas Corpus pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 2254. Dkt. 6. Petitioner challenges his 2018 conviction and sentence for four counts of Assault in the Third Degree and two counts of Criminal Trespass/Riot with a Deadly Weapon in Pierce County Superior Court. *Id.* The petition has not been served on respondent.

Under Rule 4 of the rules governing § 2254 petitions, the Court must promptly examine a habeas petition when it is filed, and if it plainly appears from the petition and its attachments the petitioner is not entitled to relief, the Court must dismiss the petition.

The Court concludes that petitioner’s federal habeas petition—on its face—is subject to dismissal due to a failure to exhaust state court remedies. Petitioner plainly admits that he has not appealed his judgment and sentence. Dkt. 6, at 1-5. Petitioner indicates that he does not intend to bring his claims to the state courts—state courts would never have the opportunity to consider the habeas claims raised in his federal petition—asserting that the state courts lack jurisdiction

1 over issues that are raised under the United States Constitution. Dkt. 6, at 5-12. However, the
2 exhaustion of state court remedies is a prerequisite to granting a petition for writ of habeas
3 corpus. *See* 28 U.S.C. § 2254(b)(1)¹. The Court therefore orders the petitioner to show cause
4 why the Court should not dismiss this federal habeas corpus petition without prejudice.

5 DISCUSSION

6 A state prisoner is required to exhaust all state court remedies, by fairly presenting claims
7 of violation of federal rights before the state courts, before seeking a writ of habeas corpus. 28
8 U.S.C. § 2254(b)(1). The exhaustion requirement is a matter of comity, intended to afford the
9 state courts the “initial opportunity to pass upon and correct alleged violations of its prisoners’
10 *federal rights.*” *Picard v. Connor*, 404 U.S. 270, 275 (1971) (emphasis added). This is
11 appropriate, because “state courts, like federal courts, are obliged to enforce federal law.”
12 *O’Sullivan v. Boerckel*, 526 U.S. 838, 844 (1999). To properly exhaust their federal claims, a
13 would-be habeas petitioner must finish “one complete round of the State’s established appellate
14 review process,” up to the highest state court with powers of discretionary review. *Id.*, 845.

15 A federal court must dismiss a federal habeas corpus petition if its claims are
16 unexhausted. *Coleman v. Thompson*, 501 U.S. 722, 731 (1991). This Court has the *sua sponte*
17 authority to examine the question of exhaustion at this stage of review. *Campbell v. Crist*, 647
18 F.2d 956, 957 (9th Cir. 1981) (“This court may consider whether state remedies have been
19 exhausted even if the state does not raise the issue”).

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22 ¹ 28 U.S.C. §2254 (b)(1) provides, in relevant part: “An application for a writ of habeas corpus on behalf
23 of a person in custody pursuant to the judgment of a State court shall not be granted unless it appears that-
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25 (A) the applicant has exhausted the remedies available in the courts of the State[.]”

1 Petitioner must raise the grounds for relief contained in his habeas petition to the
2 Washington Court of Appeals and Washington Supreme Court. Petitioner contends he has not
3 presented his grounds for relief to the state courts because the state courts lack the “jurisdictional
4 authority to decide on United States Constitution matters, which are outside [its] jurisdictional or
5 statutory governing limits.” Dkt. 6, at 5-12. This argument fails, because 28 U.S.C. § 2254(b)(1)
6 recognizes the jurisdiction of state courts to adjudicate constitutional issues. Federal habeas relief
7 is available to address where the state court’s adjudication was “contrary to, or an unreasonable
8 application of, clearly established federal law, as determined by the Supreme Court of the United
9 States.” 28 U.S.C. § 2254(d)(1).

10 As the petition plainly states, petitioner has not properly exhausted his claims for relief in
11 the state courts. Even if the petitioner believes it would be futile to argue his Constitutional
12 claims to the state courts, “the apparent futility of presenting claims to state courts does not
13 constitute cause of procedural default.” *Roberts v. Arave*, 847 F.2d 528, 530 (9th Cir. 1988).
14 Petitioner plainly acknowledges he has not presented the claims raised in his petition to the
15 highest state court and, as such, it would appear his petition is not eligible for federal habeas
16 review. Dkt. 6, at 1-12. Therefore, the Court orders petitioner to show cause why his petition is
17 cognizable for federal habeas review and should not be dismissed without prejudice.

18 ORDER

19 Based on the foregoing discussion, the Court finds that this petition is not eligible for
20 federal habeas review. The Court **orders the petitioner to show cause** in writing why the
21 petition should not be dismissed without prejudice, to allow him to exhaust his claims in the state
22 courts. Petitioner must show cause by **July 16, 2019**. The failure to file a timely response may
23 result in the dismissal of this matter without prejudice.

24 Additionally, the Clerk of Court is **directed to substitute Jeffrey A. Uttecht** as the
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1 Respondent in this action.² The Clerk of Court is also directed to update the case title.

2 Dated this 17th day of June, 2019.

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6 Theresa L. Fricke
7 United States Magistrate Judge

22 ² The Court substitutes Superintendent of Coyote Ridge Corrections Center, Jeffrey Uttecht, as the
23 respondent. According to his petition, petitioner is currently confined at Coyote Ridge Corrections Center
24 in Connell, Washington. Dkt. 6, at 1. Under Rule (2)(a) of the rules governing § 2254 Cases in the United
25 States District Courts, “If the petitioner is currently in custody under a state-court judgment, the petition
must name as respondent the state officer who has custody.”